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RELEASED IN PART  
B1, 1.4(D)

PAGE 01 BOGOTA 01904 01 OF 02 071751Z  
ACTION SS-01

INFO LOG-00 ADS-00 /001W  
-----0C9E15 071751Z /38

P 071748Z FEB 92  
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2444  
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY  
NSC WASHDC  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY MEXICO  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
USCINCSO QUARRY HEIGHTS PM  
USCINCLANT NORFOLK VA  
CIA WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 01904

DECAPTIONED

EXDIS

SOUTHCOM AND CINCLANT ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR  
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, CO  
SUBJECT: CAP FRIEND DESCRIBES ATTEMPTED COUP IN  
- VENEZUELA

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1. CONFIDENTIAL -- ENTIRE TEXT.

2. POLOFF SPENT THE AFTERNOON OF FEBRUARY 6 LISTENING  
TO AN ACCOUNT OF THE FEBRUARY 4-5 ATTEMPTED COUP IN  
VENEZUELA BY COLOMBIAN BUSINESS MAN AND CAP FRIEND  
CARLOS PEREZ NORZAGARAY. PEREZ N. IS THE ONE WHO  
INFORMED GAVIRIA OF THE COUP ATTEMPT. HIS VERSION OF  
THE EVENT FOLLOWS, AND WE LEAVE IT TO EMBASSY CARACAS  
AND THE DEPARTMENT TO INTERPRET/COMMENT ON THE STORY.

"THE PRESIDENT IS UNAVAILABLE"

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: NORMAN M BOUTON  
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)  
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 6 FEB 2017  
DATE/CASE ID: 22 JUL 2008 200503656

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3. AT ABOUT 11:00 P.M. FEBRUARY 4, PEREZ N. RECEIVED A CALL FROM VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR TO WASHINGTON GONSALVI INFORMING HIM OF THE COUP. GONSALVI HAD BEEN NOTIFIED BY HIS COUSIN, VENEZUELAN NAVY COMMANDER RODRIGUEZ. PEREZ N. TRIED TO REACH CAP THROUGH THE PRIVATE SWITCHBOARD NUMBER, WHICH HE KNEW WAS ALWAYS STAFFED--NO ANSWER. HE CALLED THE MAIN SWITCHBOARD, WHERE A "SGT. RODRIGUEZ" ANSWERED. WHEN HE ASKED FOR CAP, THE SERGEANT REPLIED "THE PRESIDENT IS UNAVAILABLE" ("NO ESTA DISPONIBLE") AND HUNG UP. "THAT WAS ENOUGH FOR ME," PEREZ N. SAID.

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"THEY INTENDED TO MURDER HIM"

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5. WHEN MIRAFLORES WAS ATTACKED CAP ESCAPED THROUGH A STAIRWELL LEADING FROM CAP'S OFFICE TO A BASEMENT. A LIEUTENANT ARRIVED FIVE MINUTES AFTER TO ASSASSINATE CAP. "THEY INTENDED TO MURDER HIM--THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT THAT," SAID PEREZ N. SOMETIME LATER, CAP'S HEAD OF SECURITY, FNU FERNANDEZ, KILLED CAP'S WOULD-BE ASSASSIN.

6. CAP PROCEEDED TO THE VENEVISION TELEVISION STUDIOS, WHERE HE MET STATION OWNER OSVALDO CISNEROS. EACH HAD DECIDED TO GO THERE INDEPENDENTLY--CAP HAD

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NOT HAD TIME TO CALL TO ARRANGE A MEETING. BY 1:30  
CAP WAS ON THE AIR. SURPRISINGLY, THERE WAS NO REBEL  
ATTEMPT TO TAKE OVER VENEVISION. AT THE TIME CAP WAS  
A SITTING DUCK, PROTECTED BY ONLY THREE BODYGUARDS.

7. PEREZ N. POINTS TO THE FACT THE REBELS DID NOT  
ATTEMPT TO CONTROL THE TV AND RADIO STATIONS AS  
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ANOTHER INDICATION THEY MEANT TO KILL CAP. WITH CAP  
DEAD, THE REBELS ELIMINATE THE DANGER OF HIS USING THE  
MEDIA TO MARSHAL SUPPORT.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: "THE NIGHT OF THE TANKS"  
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8. DURING THE CONVERSATION, PEREZ N. RECEIVED A CALL  
FROM VENEZUELAN AMBASSADOR GONSALVI, AND THEY

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INFO LOG-00 ADS-00 /001W  
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P 071748Z FEB 92  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2445  
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY  
NSC WASHDC  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

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AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY MEXICO  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
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USCINCLANT NORFOLK VA  
CIA WASHDC  
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BOGOTA 01904

EXDIS

SOUTHCOR AND CINCLANT ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, CO  
SUBJECT: CAP FRIEND DESCRIBES ATTEMPTED COUP IN  
REMINISCED BRIEFLY ABOUT THE "NIGHT OF THE TANKS," THE  
TIME IN 1989 WHEN MILITARY TANKS WERE DISPATCHED  
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INEXPLICABLY TO MIRAFLORES. PEREZ N. WAS IN CARACAS  
AT THE TIME, AND HAD BEEN INVITED TO MEET WITH  
GONSALVI, THEN GOVERNMENT MINISTER AND ACTING  
PRESIDENT. THEN PRESIDENT JAIME LUSINCHI WAS AT A RIO  
GROUP SUMMIT MEETING IN PUNTA DEL ESTE.

9. GONSALVI DID NOT SHOW UP AT THE APPOINTED TIME,  
AND CALLED LATER TO SAY HE HAD A BIT OF A PROBLEM--"MY  
OFFICE IS SURROUNDED BY TANKS." GONSALVI SAID HE  
WOULD SEND A CAR TO TAKE PEREZ TO THE GUEST HOUSE ON  
THE GROUNDS OF THE CLUB MILITAR, WHERE HE WOULD MEET  
HIM. WHEN PEREZ ARRIVED HE WAS GREETED BY GONSALVI'S  
SECRETARY AND TWO SUBMACHINE GUN-TOTING "RED BERETS."  
PEREZ N. ASKED THE SECRETARY IF HE WAS BEING  
ARRESTED. "WE'RE ALL ARRESTED," SHE REPLIED.

10. GONSALVI AND THE TOP MILITARY LEADERS ARRIVED.  
ALL DISCLAIMED KNOWLEDGE OF WHO HAD ORDERED THE  
MOBILIZATION OF THE TANKS. PEREZ N. HAD A DINNER DATE  
THAT NIGHT WITH THEN-PRESIDENTIAL PRE-CANDIDATE CAP,  
AND WHEN HE CALLED TO SAY TO EXPLAIN WHY HE WAS UNABLE  
TO ATTEND, CAP TOLD HIM TO STAY PUT AND BE HIS EYES  
AND EARS. WHEN PEREZ N. WAS FINALLY ALLOWED TO LEAVE,  
HE OVERHEARD TWO OFFICERS DISCUSSING HOW PLIANT

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("SUAVECITO") GONSALVI HAD BEEN DURING HIS DETENTION.  
PEREZ N. IS CONVINCED THE OFFICERS INVOLVED IN THE  
"NIGHT OF THE TANKS" ARE THE SAME ONES BEHIND THE COUP  
ATTEMPT.

11. COMMENT: PEREZ N. HAS A FLAIR FOR THE DRAMATIC,  
AS WELL AS AN INCREDIBLE MEMORY. HE REVELS IN DETAIL,  
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AND OFTEN TAKES OFF ON DIFFERENT TANGENTS BEFORE  
RETURNING TO THE MAIN BODY OF THE STORY.  
DISCREPANCIES IN TIMES AND NAMES MAY BE THE RESULT OF  
POLOFF'S FAULTY MEMORY RATHER THAN MISTAKES BY PEREZ  
N. HIS ACCESS TO CAP AND THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE  
GOC ARE UNQUESTIONED. SEPTTEL RELATES GOC REACTION AND  
OTHER SIDELIGHTS OF THE COUP ATTEMPT.

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